

Message Text

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INFO AMCONSUL BREMEN

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SUBJECT. GOVERNMENT LEADERS REVIEW OF CURRENT LABOR
SITUATION AND POLICY GOALS WITH DGB UNIONA.

1. SUMMARY. DURING THE MONTHS OF SEPTEMBER' OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER, 8 NATIONAL TRADE UNION CONGRESSES ARE SCHEDULED. GUEST SPEAKERS WILL INCLUDE CHANCELLOR HELMUT SCHMIDT, LABOR MINISTER ARENDT, EDUCATION MINISTER ROHDE AND OTHER GOVERNMENT MINISTERS. GOVERNMENT LEADERS ARE USING TRADE UNION CONGRESSES AND THE ELECTION CAMPAIGNS IN THE STATES OF HESSE AND BAVARIA TO PROMOTE APPRECIATION FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S SUCCESSES IN MEETING LABOR'S GOALS AND TO GAIN SUPPORT FOR THE POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC STABILIZATION PROGRAM. AT THE FOOD AND ALLIED WORKERS CONGRESS IN WOLFSBURG AND AT THE AGRICULTURAL, GARDEN AND FORESTRY WORKERS UNION CONGRESS IN OFFENBURG; LABOR MINISTER ARENDT TOOK THE POSITION THAT THE AVERAGE GERMAN WORKER, WITH STEADILY INCREASING REAL INCOME AND MORE LEGISLATED SOCIAL BENEFITS, LIVES BETTER THAN EVER. ARENDT ASSURED HIS TRADE UNION AUDIENCES THAT FULL EMPLOYMENT REMAINS THE MAIN GOAL OF THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT AND THAT THE CURRENT ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTIES ARE RECEIVING TOP PRIORITY FROM THE GOVERNMENT IN ITS ECONOMIC STABILIZATION PROGRAM. ARENDT MAINTAINED THE RECENT INCREASES IN UNEMPLOYMENT WERE LESS SERIOUS THAN THE OPPOSITION CLAIMS AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT ABANDON ITS STABILIZATION PROGRAM RATHER THAN MAKING BASIC CHANGES IN THE ECONOMIC POLICY, THE GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE ENERGETIC ACTION TO TARGET PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT IN LOCAL AND STATE AREAS WHERE ABOVE AVERAGE UNEMPLOYMENT EXISTS. ARENDT AND EDUCATION MINISTER ROHDE ALSO REVIEWED THE GOVERNMENT'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL REFORM SINCE 1969 AND SAID THAT THE TOP PRIORITY GOALS OF THE GOVERNMENT INCLUDE THE PROMOTE PASSAGE OF THE CODETERMINATION (MITBESTIMMUNG) DRAFT LAW NOW BEFORE THE BUNDESTAG, DRAFTING A NEW LAW ON PRIVATE PENSIONS, REFORM OF THE LAW PROTECTING WORKING YOUTH AND REFORM OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND MANPOWER TRAINING.

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END SUMMARY.

2. AT THE CONVENTIONS OF THE FOODWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL WORKERS UNIONS LABOR MINISTER ARENDT CLAIMED THAT THE AVERAGE REAL INCOME FOR WORKERS HAS INCREASED 4.5 PERCENT PER YEAR AND FOR PENSIONERS 4.9 PERCENT PER YEAR FROM 1969 TO 1973 AND PREDICTED A SIMILAR RATE OF INCREASE FOR THIS YEAR.

3. ON DOMESTIC SOCIAL REFORM, BOTH ARENDT AND ROHDE SAID THAT THERE HAS BEEN MORE SOCIAL REFORM DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS OF THE SPD/FDP COALITION THAN EVER BEFORE IN THE HISTORY OF THE FRG. DESPITE THE STABILIZATION PROGRAM, THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF ITS SOCIAL REFORM GOALS INCLUDING PARITY CODETERMINATION IN LARGE ENTERPRISES, REFORMS IN PRIVATE PENSION LAWS, VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND MANPOWER TRAINING AND PROTECTION OF WORKING YOUTH. HOWEVER, ON TWO OCCASIONS ARENDT INDICATED THAT THERE ARE LIMITS TO THE GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL REFORM CAPABILITIES BECAUSE THE WORKERS' TAX BURDEN HAS INCREASED TO THE POINT WHERE ALL NEW MEASURES' BENEFITS WILL HAVE TO BE CAREFULLY BALANCED AGAINST THE ADDITIONAL TAX BURDEN. ARENDT STRESSED THE GOVERNMENT'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL REFORM SINCE 1969 WHICH INCLUDE AMENDING

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THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS LAW TO STRENGTHEN THE TRADE UNION ROLE, INCREASES IN SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS, INTRODUCTION OF FLEXIBLE RETIREMENT AGE PROVISIONS, FREE PREVENTIVE MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS UNDER NEW HEALTH INSURANCE LEGISLATION, REGULAR ADJUSTMENT OF WAR VICTIMS BENEFITS TO WAGE AND SALARY DEVELOPMENTS, REFORMS OF LEGISLATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF BENEFITS FOR HANDICAPPED PERSONS, COMPENSATION FOR LOST SALARIES IN CASE OF EMPLOYER BANKRUPTCY AND A VARIETY OF MEASURES FOR "HUMANIZATION OF WORK".

ARENDT SAID THAT ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION SHOULD BEGIN AT THE WORKING PLACE WHERE WORKERS SPEND ONE THIRD OF THEIR LIVES. ALTHOUGH THE ACCIDENTS ARE DECLINING, THERE ARE STILL OVER 206-000 ACCIDENTS AND 1,100 WORKERS KILLED FOR AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY WORKERS ALONE. THEREFORE THE GOVERNMENT HAS PASSED A NEW LAW WHICH REQUIRES FIRMS TO PROVIDE SAFETY ENGINEERS AND INDUSTRIAL HEALTH DOCTORS AS PART OF THE OVERALL EFFORT TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND SAFETY ON THE JOB. 30 SAFETY INSPECTION STATIONS HAVE BEEN CREATED TO CERTIFY NEW MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT AND A NEW RESEARCH INSTITUTE ON QUALITY OF LIFE ON THE JOB WAS CREATED THERE IS A NEW FOUR-POINT RESEARCH PROGRAM WHICH INCLUDES DEVELOPMENT OF NEW PROTECTION STANDARDS FOR JOBS AND EQUIPMENT, DEVELOPMENT OF MODEL PROPOSALS AND PILOT PROJECTS ON WORK ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURING OF JOBS DEVELOPMENT OF NEW WORK TECHNOLOGY GIVING HIGHER PRIORITY TO

THE HUMAN FACTOR IN PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION AND APPLICATION OF NEW SCIENTIFIC EXPERIENCES IN GERMANY AND OTHER COUNTRIES THE FIRST RESEARCH PROJECT INVOLVES ATTEMPTS TO REDUCE DIRT AND DUST POLLUTION ON THE JOB ANOTHER MEASURE APPROVED BY THE GOVERNMENT IS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FEDERAL AGENCY FOR ACCIDENT PREVENTION IN DORTMUND WITH A SERIES OF RESEARCH PROJECTS STARTING WITH ACCIDENT PREVENTION ON TRANSPORT FACILITIES USED WITHIN FACTORIES AND ENTERPRISES HE CALLED FOR A BROADER CONCEPT OF PROTECTION OF WORKERS, WHICH WOULD NOT ONLY PROTECT THEM AGAINST DISABILITY BUT GIVE THEM A GREATER OPPORTUNITY FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SELF-IMPROVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN DECISIONS AFFECTING THEIR INTERESTS.

4. ON CODETERMINATION, ARENDT HAS REPEATEDLY STATED THAT THE MODEL PROPOSED IN THE GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED DRAFT LEGISLATION IS FAIR, PRACTICAL AND ACCEPTABLE TO ALL GROUPS INVOLVED AND POLITICALLY REALIZABLE. ARENDT TOLD THE FOOD WORKERS CONVENTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S DRAFT LEGISLATION WAS A COMPROMISE, BUT IT COULD NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ALL PROPOSALS AND DESIRES SINCE SO MANY DIFFERENT INTERESTS ARE INVOLVED. IN EFFECT, HE CALLED UPON THE DGB AND ITS AFFILIATED UNIONS TO ACCEPT THE GOVERNMENT PROPOSAL AND NOT TO WAIT FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF BETTER LEGISLATION IN THE FUTURE. (DESPITE ARENDT'S APPEALS THE DGB IS STILL PRESSING FOR CHANGES IN THE LEGISLATION IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE -TRUE PARITY CODETERMINATION AND ELIMINATION OF PROVISIONS WHICH REQUIRE THAT DISPUTED ISSUES BE REFERRED TO THE STOCKHOLDERS FOR FINAL DECISION AND WHICH REQUIRE THAT MANAGEMENT EMPLOYEES BE RECOGNIZED AS A SEPARATE GROUP.)

5. ON EDUCATION REFORM, EDUCATION AND SCIENCE MINISTER

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HELMUT ROHDE INDICATED THAT THE IMPROVEMENTS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN WHICH 75 PERCENT OF THE YOUTH PARTICIPATE, WILL BE THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF GOVERNMENT EDUCATION REFORM EFFORTS DURING THE REST OF THIS LEGISLATIVE

PERIOD. HE ALSO CALLED FOR A RESTRUCTURING OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FUNDS TO GIVE HIGHER PRIORITY FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS AFFECTING THE HUMANIZATION OF WORK AND THE SOLUTION OF URGENT SOCIAL PROBLEMS RATHER THAN WASTING RESEARCH MONEY FOR PRESTIGE PROJECTS.

6. ARENDT HAS BEEN PERHAPS THE GOVERNMENT'S MOST EFFECTIVE SPOKESMAN IN COUNTERING THE CDU'S CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF INFLATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT, WITH ROHDE ATTEMPTING TO SECURE LABOR SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S VOCATIONAL EDUCATION REFORM EFFORTS. THE LATTER WILL REGULATE THE BEST ROLE OF THE CHAMBERS OF HANDICRAFT AND INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYER APPRENTICESHIP AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS. THE GOVERNMENT'S REFORM EFFORTS AND ATTEMPTS HAVE ENCOUNTERED SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL AND EMPLOYER OPPOSITION WHICH IS BLAMED FOR CAUSING A DECREASE OF APPRENTICESHIP OPENINGS OFFERED BY INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYERS.

NEXT WEEK CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT WILL REPRESENT THE GOVERNMENT AT THE DGB METALWORKERS CONGRESS IN HANNOVER TO CONTINUE THE CAMPAIGN TO INSURE CONTINUED LABOR SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

COMMENT. ARENDT'S ACCOUNTS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE GOVERNMENT IN DEALING WITH JOBS, WAGES AND SOCIAL REFORM RECEIVED ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORT AT THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL WORKERS CONGRESSES. ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE TRADE UNION DELEGATES ARE SPD MEMBERS AND DO NOT REFLECT SOME OF THE CDU PESSIMISM ABOUT THE ECONOMY, THEIR REACTIONS INDICATE THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT, ESPECIALLY ARENDT, ENJOY WIDE-SPREAD LABOR SUPPORT. END COMMENT.
HILLENBRAND

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